

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Temporary Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Visitor Center and Gift Shop Opens March 13

The new temporary Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Visitor Center and Gift Shop will open on Saturday, March 13, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The visitor center and gift shop is located in front of Paso Picacho Campground, Highway 79, Cuyamaca Rancho State Park. Co-sponsors are the Cuyamaca Rancho Foundation Fire Recovery Project and the Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Interpretive Association

In October, 2003, the Cuyamaca Rancho State Park headquarters, visitor center and museum located in the historic Dyer House were destroyed when the Cedar Fire swept across and burned 99% of the State Park. Since that time the park has been closed to the public because of public safety and resource protection concerns.

The Cuyamaca Rancho Foundation (CRF) Fire Recovery Project focus has been to coordinate the rebuilding efforts with the park and to solicit funds to help with the variety of rebuilding tasks so that the park can once again accommodate visitors. Foundation President, Molly Jean Featheringill said, "Many people in the region have been asking how they can help the park restore the public facilities we have enjoyed for so long. Together with the generosity of the general public, and designated grant contributions, funding can be directed towards specific needs such as campground replacements, museum restoration, and other facilities."

District Superintendent Matthew Fuzie states, "The funds for this project will allow the contributors a place to donate and know that the money will go for a specific purpose as requested. We're looking at the fire scarred areas as an open laboratory where we can learn from this event and the natural recovery processes how to better manage the parks and open spaces we all care for so deeply. We will recover and continue to succeed."

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The first access the public has to the park will be on March 13th with the opening of the temporary visitor center and gift shop in front of the Paso Picacho campground. The Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Interpretive Association (CRSPIA) has donated a trailer to serve as a temporary visitor center and gift shop. State Park volunteers will staff the center. CRSPIA President Marcello Mastrocola states, "We are most happy to contribute to the enormous effort in the park's recovery. This is an important first step toward reopening the park for the public."

The visitor center will be open to the public on the weekends only until further notice. Hours are Saturday & Sunday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Park Superintendent Laura Itogawa states, "The parking area in front of Paso Picacho campground will be the only place in the Park for visitors to legally stop in the park for now. The trails, campgrounds, and day use areas will remain closed. We are hoping to have some of these facilities open by late spring or early summer. Our staff and dedicated volunteers are working very hard to make this happen."

Since 2000, the Cuyamaca Rancho Foundation (CRF), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, has worked with Cuyamaca Rancho State Park to acquire land from willing sellers for inclusion into the Cuyamaca State Park. Now, in response to the devastating effects of the Cedar Fire in the Park, CRF is inaugurating the Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Fire Recovery Project to assist the park in acquiring funding for restoration of the trails, campgrounds and public facilities. The project includes restoring the historic Dyar House, which was lost in the fire and had served as park headquarters since 1969. The Dyar House featured a museum, a gift shop, provided public educational tools and programs, as well as visitor center facilities. To date the Fire Recovery Project has raised \$9,200. CRSPIA is also a 501 (c)(3) non-profit which puts its funds directly into the restoration of the park, supports the volunteer program by providing tools and materials, and provides funding for interpretive programming, including the rebuilding of the museum.

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